

MOTOR TRUCKS HELP MAKE FAST MAIL

Swift Vegetable Vans for
Farmers—Figures on Postal Program.

Washington.—Within a few years the postoffice department will be the largest single user of motor trucks in America and will operate them on mail delivery routes all through the United States. Details regarding this service were given at a meeting in Chicago recently for the organization of the Highway Industrial Association. J. I. Blakeslee, fourth assistant postmaster-general, as follows:

Recently the postoffice department has taken a deep interest in the progress of highway improvement, the development of the motor truck and in methods of utilizing both. There has been a reduction of farm production owing to the draft at a time when it is imperative that production should be increased. More convenient transportation would stimulate production, though somewhat late in starting, the postoffice department is endeavoring to overcome this loss through the "farm-to-table" movement.

The only way to demonstrate to a producer that it is worth while to increase production, is to put some visible means of communication between him and that is by establishing motor truck parcel post routes. There are in the United States 43,395 rural mail routes and 16,000 star routes, but the average number of pieces of parcel post matter carried per day to producers on these routes is only eight per route, and only one piece per route from producer to consumer. There is not a single parcel post route from New York out into productive territory; only one from Philadelphia and two from Chicago.

Will Reduce Living Cost.

"Motor truck parcel post routes will aid producers and eventually reduce the cost of living. Fourteen handlings are now required to deliver eggs from the producer in Vineland, N. J., to the consumer in Philadelphia, and this number is doubled when the eggs are shipped from Philadelphia to consumers in New York. Only six handlings will be required by the motor truck service between New York and Philadelphia.

"There are approximately 2,200,000 miles of public road in the United States, more than half of which there is no mail service, and 156,000 miles of improved road, on 120,000 miles of which there is no service. To develop the farm-to-table movement it is only necessary to take advantage of highways already existing and improved. With a federal appropriation of \$125,000 and an Ohio state appropriation of \$50,000, the Columbus Zanesville road was put in good condition for motor truck service a year and a half ago, and the first postoffice motor truck will be put in operation over this road within the next thirty days.

"Five years ago a proposed chain of motor mail routes from New York to San Francisco was treated as a joke. Today it will be difficult to present arguments why such routes should not be operated from Portland, Me., to New Orleans and up to Chicago. Only one section of this route is in doubt,

DAW-GONE! WHAR DO DIS OL' BLOCK GO?



This recruit is puzzled. His task is to fit a lot of blocks of various shapes into corresponding holes in a flat board. But it's plain that "de ol' blocks won't fit in right." After two hours of such tests the army officer is in possession of a pretty fair knowledge of the soldier's mental ability and nervous temperament.

a six-mile stretch through a swamp between Washington and Richmond, Va.

Cover Long Routes in Winter.

"During the winter postal trucks have been operated daily on a 110-mile round-trip route from Oxford, Pa., to Philadelphia, without missing a trip. Growers at Oxford were shipping from one to one and a half tons of mushrooms into Philadelphia daily, when the express service they had been using broke down. It was essential to have a heated motor truck for the business. In three days the postoffice provided one. The first day it carried 100 pounds of mushrooms and the second day, Sunday, it carried 800 pounds. In the first three days the truck earned \$30 a day. This one truck will earn \$12,000 a year and the service will cost \$4,200. Heretofore the growers had to ship their mushrooms 120 miles to get them to Philadelphia, fifty-five miles distant. A motor truck route from Washington to Leonardtown has been in operation three years, with a 2-ton truck and 1½-ton trailer. It carries the mail for 104 postoffices and 102,000 persons. Revenue is derived from first-class mail as well as parcel post matter. There is also a motor mail route between Baltimore and Gettysburg, and the postal revenue is far

beyond the cost of operation.

"Throughout the most productive part of Georgia is a good highway, paralleling the Dixie Highway and connecting the county seats of nine counties, yet the producers there have no direct means of communication with Atlanta. From Savannah to Macon, 100 miles, not one producer is shipping to market. Growers will not raise produce without some visible means of shipping.

"Many truck gardeners within ten to fifteen miles of cities drive to the markets with loads of produce and think this is a cheap way of marketing, do not think of their time and that of their horses as worth anything, as they pay out nothing in cash. But how about the farmers twenty to thirty miles out? These are the producers the postoffice is going after. To enlarge the delivery zone of the city it must establish routes fifty to 100 miles out into territory where farmers are not producing their utmost.

"A bill was introduced in the senate last year providing for experimental motor truck routes, but it failed to pass because of lack of time. The postoffice, however, decided to try out its plans under the present laws.

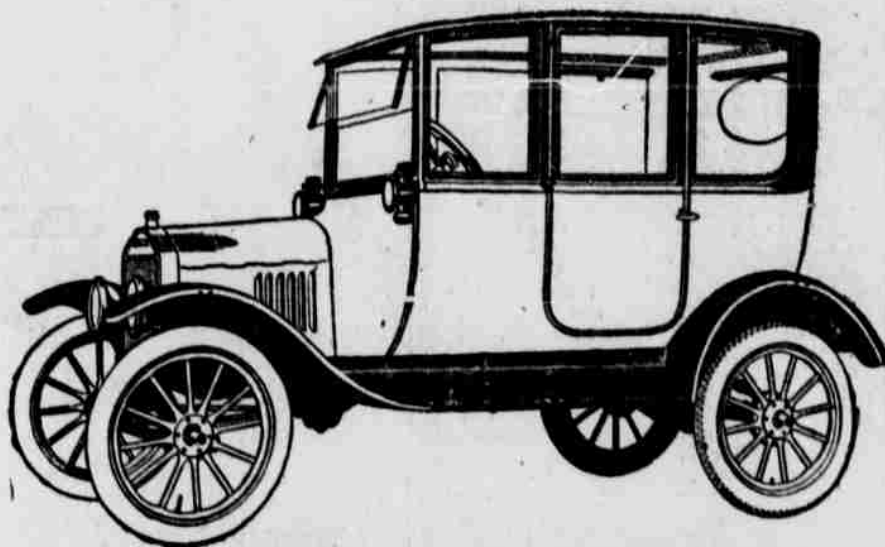
"An emergency confronts the country and daily transportation must be put before the farmer to stimulate production. The motor truck is not confined to fixed rails or routes, but can travel roundabout to avoid delays. Roads must be improved and the most permanent type of road is cheapest in the long run, as the matter of upkeep is involved. There is a class of citizens who say the government should not encourage use of trucks on improved roads because they injure them, but the postoffice cannot see the logic of investing money in roads that are not going to be utilized to the utmost. Every evidence of material prosperity has followed lines of communication. The west expanded after the development of prairie schooner trails and transcontinental railways until it has become the territory upon which the country depends for foodstuffs. We are going back now to the post-road stage.

Should Cause Reduction.

"Some people are skeptical about motor truck postal routes reducing the cost of living. They say that when direct shipping means is supplied the producer will at once raise his prices to conform with prices in the city. But sooner or later some of the producers will shade prices a bit, then others will follow until prices begin to pyramid downward instead of upward. They have been increasing for the last ten years and it will take time for them to come down. Somebody is controlling prices now, but with direct producer-to-consumer service the market cannot continue to be controlled.

"As the postoffice department develops its plans a market will be created for more trucks than all the manufacturers can produce. It is essential to standardize some type of truck for the service, heated in winter and cooled in summer. C. O. D. service for farm-to-table delivery presents a problem, and the department invites suggestions as to how the producer and consumer can be mutually protected."

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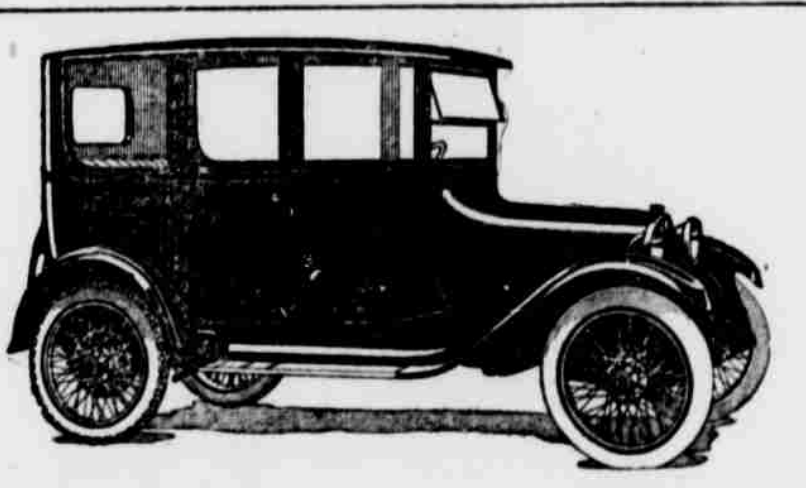
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